DOCUMENT RESUME

CG 004 147

ED 031 717

By-Norfleet, Morris

A Systems Approach to Student Personnel Services.

Morehead State Univ., Ky.
Pub Date [68]
Note-6p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.40
Descriptors-*Counseling Effectiveness, *Counseling Programs, *Student Personnel Services, *Systems Analysis, *Systems Approach, Systems Concepts

Increased enrollment and student activism has created a situation within student personnel services that almost defies most management systems. A systems approach can enable student personnel services to evaluate what they are doing to determine if counselors are making a difference in the lives of students. The characteristics of this approach are: (1) state the real needs, (2) define objectives behaviorally, (3) define constraints, (4) identify and analyze alternatives, (5) identify milestones, (6) implementation, (7) evaluation of the system, and (8) feedback and modification. Systems analysis offers several advantages among which are: (1) it focuses on process with a major emphasis on operations research, (2) it provides for adequate allocation of resources to best get the job done, (3) it provides a systematic and rational approach to analyzing the problematic situation, (4) it forces analyzers to think through the flow of the problem, and (5) it forces a comparison of alternatives in a complex situation. (Author/KJ)

ED031717

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

A Systems Approach to Student Personnel Services

Morris Norfleet
Vice President for
Research & Development
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

CG 004147

Summary

Student Personnel Services have tended to progress from the "My Children" stage as referred to by one individual who headed this entire program in a college, plus taught full time to "the boys and girls on campus" as enrollments grew to "we must find these students a place to sleep" when the avalanche of students hit campus. Student Personnel Services were not prepared for this tremendous growth and as a result haven't found time to re-look for new direction.

A systems approach to Student Personnel Services can provide us with a systematic approach ... enabling us to evaluate what we are doing to determine if we, in fact, are making a difference in the lives of our students.

What do we mean when we say "Take a systems approach?" The characteristics of this approach can be briefly stated in seven steps:

1. State the needs you are trying to meet or satisfy.
2. State the objectives from a behavioral viewpoint which contribute to satisfying the identified needs.
3. Define constraints which might hinder the personnel services program.
4. Determine alternative ways of meeting the real needs of the students.
5. Select the best alternative by carefully analyzing all pertinent data and information.
6. Develop plans and implement the selected alternative(s) for testing.
7. Establish milestones for frequent and continual evaluation to provide a feedback system for program modification and improvement.

This approach will permit a careful study of processes, provide advantageous allocation of resources and enables the direction of the Student Personnel Service to be focused on the student.

Systems Analysis
in
Student Personnel Services

The Mystique in Reality

Much has been said about the use of systems analysis in education and I tried to give an abbreviated synopsis of the approach in the summary of this paper. The systems analysis approach is not new nor is it a panacea to all ills. Because of the implementation of this approach in our Research and Development Center and the degree to which it has assisted us in our management approach has created a desire to apply it elsewhere.

Increased enrollment and student activism has created a situation within student personnel services that almost defies most management systems. I shall attempt to show how systems analysis can be applied to student personnel services and show what the approach has to offer. I feel that I will be in a much better position to present this paper one year from now than at the present. We are implementing this approach in some phases of our student personnel services at the present time and shall be further implementing the program next year.

State the Real Needs

If we accept the concept that student personnel services should be focused on the student to meet his needs, we may find a dichotomy in what actually exists. Recently, we tried to identify the needs to be met in a college orientation program and found that the majority of stated needs for orientation sessions were administrative needs, not student needs.

The identification of needs to be met can best be done by <u>all</u> those to be involved in administering the program to satisfy those needs plus representation from the target group. Each component of student personnel services must be examined and the needs focusing on the student.

Define Objectives

Objectives are stated to give direction to the learning sequence, the operation of a program, and to bring into focus what is to be done. Educators have been guilty of stating objectives that gives very little direction to the program to be implemented and frequently, the objectives are stated in non-measurable terms.

In charting the cause for any program the objectives should be clearly stated preferrably in behavioral terms to permit measuring the degree of success of efforts exerted using quantifying terms is a characteristic of behavioral objectives.

> Example: The new student involvement approach to college orientation will reduce the number of college dropouts for the first four week period by twenty per cent over last year.

Define Constraints

Many student personnel programs seem to encounter difficulty that could have been avoided if vigorous attempts had been undertaken to identify the constraints or limitations of the program to be implemented.

Limitations such as availability of staff, especially qualified staff, physical facilities and budgetory limitations may prevent the immediate meeting of all identified needs. However, one is able to phase in to meeting identified needs as limitations will permit. Through this process limitations may be removed with less effort because they are brought out into the open where approaches of elimination can be discussed. Other constraints can be identified, the attempt here is to convey the basic idea.

Identify and Analyze Alternatives

After the needs, objectives and constraints are delineated one is in a position to analyze alternative approaches to the problem solution, or program implementation. This is no easy task because of the disagreement among authorities, causes of the problems are unclear, and field operations have a multitude of variables impinging upon the situation.

This approach forces a step by step analyzation of each alternative and permits the selection of the best approach based on factual information. A problem of no minor dimension is: "Have we selected the right variables that force constraints on the situation.")

Identify Milestones

Measurement points should be established throughout the program to permit revision as the operation progresses. If plans are not satisfactorily progressing for the alternative selected, changes may be made to what was originally thought to be the second best approach to the problem.

Implementation

Develop specific plans for implementation of the programs. At this point I should like to suggest that a close scrutiny be made of PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Techniques). I have found this approach to be invaluable in implementing complex programs with a multitude of variables which tend to be almost uncontrollable in nature.

Evaluation of the System

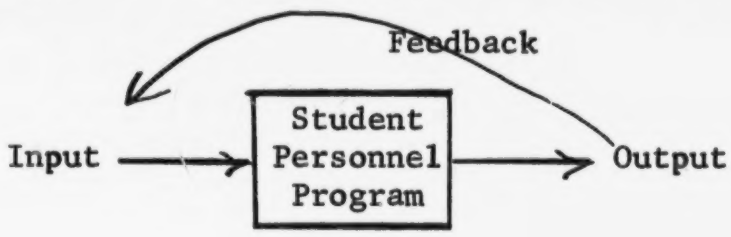
A concise evaluation system must be developed to measure results based upon the behavioral objectives of the program. The establishment of milestones, as referred to earlier, permits continuous evaluation with program revision while in operation and the terminal evaluation focuses upon new program direction.

The extent to which each behavioral objective is met should be measured, as well as the approaches to meet the objectives.

Feedback and Modification

This point has been delineated because of the importance that should be given to it even though it is referred to in the discussion of the evaluation system.

A diagram as follows shows how the feedback could work:



This design permits for program revision in view of output which can be measured because the objectives were stated in measurable terms.

What does systems analysis have to offer?

1. It focuses on process with a major emphasis on operations research.

2. It provides for adequate allocation of resources to best get the job done.

3. It focuses on structural alternatives such as what kinds of decisions are to be made.

4. There is a difference in systems and this must be recognized when the planning is done.

5. It provides a systematic and rational approach to analyzing the problematic situation.

6. It forces analyzers to think through the flow of the problem.

7. It forces a comparison of alternatives in a complex situation.

8. It provides for factual information whereby the analyzation of input-output factors can be evaluated.

This paper has been directed to a brief overview of systems analysis with implication for its application to the field of student personnel services. Other areas should have been included such as PERT but the time limitation prohibited further elaboration.

We are currently applying this approach to the admissions office and have been amazed at our findings which have enabled us to save much time and do a better job in helping the student.

As stated earlier, one year from now will add much knowledge to the writer on the feasibility of this approach and the extent of application to student personnel services.